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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. LAMALFA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 26, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DOUG LAMALFA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

SPECIAL IMMIGRANT VISA PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, in 2007, I introduced the first legislation to help the Iraqi and Afghan nationals that helped Americans in those countries to get them to safety in the United States. These are the people who were interpreters, guides, and drivers—people who performed countless tasks without which our military, diplomatic, and redevelopment efforts

would have been impossible. There was an implicit promise that, as they risked their lives to help us, we would work to protect them when the American presence was scaled down. Thousands of these people are now threatened on a daily basis by people with very long memories.

It would seem as though this shouldn't be an impossible task. After all, these are people who risked their lives to protect and serve Americans. If they had wanted to harm us, they had countless opportunities to lead people down the wrong path, attack, assault, and mislead; but, by all accounts, thousands of these people performed critical tasks faithfully, if not flawlessly.

What has not been flawless is how the State Department and Homeland Security have managed the Special Immigrant Visa program we fought so hard to establish. It takes incredible effort to fight bureaucracy, delays, and the procedural hurdles, which too often end in frustration. Approvals have been just a trickle, and there is no sign of improvement. Instead, the program could disappear.

The authorization for the Iraqi Immigrant Visa expires in 4 days. And this is a country that is on the verge of collapse. Violence is on the upswing and these people have been left twisting. Many have been forced into hiding. Others, along with their families, have not just been threatened, but killed.

We have been unable to get anything on the continuing resolution to keep the program alive. Frankly, given the state of play in Congress right now, the continuing resolution doesn't look like a very stable basis for hope.

There is a possible solution: a unanimous consent provision that will extend the program, at no additional budget cost, which will keep the pipeline open to accept visas until we can get back to meeting our moral obligation.

It should be a simple matter to pass the House. There is overwhelming bi-

partisan support that is led in the most articulate and forceful way by new Members in both parties, like TULSI GABBARD and ADAM KINZINGER, who are themselves veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. This bipartisan group of recent veterans has seen the invaluable service and sacrifices of these people, and they feel a deep commitment to their safety. Sadly, not everybody in Congress feels that commitment, that moral obligation. The House Judiciary Committee leadership has been passive, if not outright opposed.

There's no guarantee that there will be a continuing resolution. In fact, the odds are getting a little more remote by the day. If this program shuts down for even a few hours, it will set back progress because of the cumbersome, convoluted nature of the program and security checks. People will be forced back to square one for approval, with their lives in great peril.

I would hope the House Republican leadership does not allow one or two people to veto meeting our moral obligation that has such broad bipartisan support. It will be to the shame of this body if we can't come together and protect the people we counted on in battle—and who are now counting on us.

This sad story is documented in Kirk Johnson's recent book, "To Be a Friend is Fatal: The Fight to Save the Iraqis America Left Behind." The title really says it all: "To Be a Friend is Fatal: The Fight to Save the Iraqis America Left Behind."

So far, we have failed them. I hope the House will rise to the occasion before it's too late.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF HARRIET HOWARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. DESJARLAIS) for 5 minutes.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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